

## U.S. Attorney's Corner



**P**roject Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) simply works. Violence doesn't have to be a way of life. We have already seen a significant decrease in gun

crimes in Lake Charles, and we are working hard to do the same in Shreveport and other cities of our District. The PSN message to criminals is that the revolving door of criminals going in and out of state court ends under PSN.

**I**f a criminal commits a crime with a gun, we will review the case. If federal charges are filed, we will seek immediate detention until the case is resolved. We have formed partnerships with the district attorneys' offices, police and sheriffs' departments in Lafayette, Lake Charles, Shreveport, Alexandria, and Monroe, as well as other organizations, including the University of Louisiana, both in Lafayette and in Monroe, in a comprehensive approach to reducing gun violence by networking existing local programs and providing those programs with additional tools.

**O**n a national level, federal gun crime prosecutions have increased significantly every year under PSN. From FY 2000 to FY 2003, federal firearms prosecutions increased 68%. In FY 2003, the Justice Department filed over 10,500 federal firearms cases – the highest number ever recorded by the Department.

**T**he number of defendants charged with federal gun crimes rose from approximately 10,600 to over 13,000 from FY 2002 to FY 2003, a record increase of almost 23%. These figures are the highest on the record in a single year since the Department began recording this information.

*Continued Page 2*

## PSN in Shreveport

**By: Lt. Kim Price**  
Shreveport Police Dept.

**T**he City of Shreveport serves as the urban center and economic hub of the Ark-Latex area. With a population of 201,270, Shreveport is the third largest city in Louisiana and ranks as the 77th largest city nationwide. According to the FBI Uniform Crime Reports, Shreveport ranks in the top 50th percentile or higher for crime, and in the past, has ranked first in homicide per 100,000 people. In 2002, 51% of violent crimes in Shreveport were committed with a gun, and 82% of homicides were committed with a gun, compared to the national average of 66%.

On May 14, 2001, President Bush announced Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN): America's Network Against Gun Violence. In April 2003, the Shreveport Police Department (SPD) applied for, and on July 14, 2003, was awarded a \$250,000 grant.

Under this grant, SPD is partnered with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF), Louisiana Department of Corrections, Probation and Parole, and the U. S. Attorney's Office of the Western District of Louisiana.

In the grant application, specific geographical areas – Police District 9, Cedar Grove, and District 10, Sunset Acres – were targeted as having the highest number of gun crimes.

The target areas will be revised over time with the input of the PSN Crime Research Partner, the University of Louisiana at Monroe, and the SPD crime analyst using crime mapping and incident based reporting. A primary goal of the grant is to increase the number of prosecutions for gun-related offenses. The partners under this grant are also part of a larger PSN working group, or local task force, that includes the Caddo Parish Sheriff's Office and the District Attorney's office for the 1st Judicial District.

Since SPD's operations began under the PSN grant, the unit has made over 100 arrests and seized 56 firearms, 452 grams of cocaine, 5,690 grams of marijuana, and 809 assorted Sch 2, 3 and 4 narcotics in the City of Shreveport. The SPD Gun Violence Unit, with the assistance of the SPD Narcotics Unit, is currently in the process of targeting the city's known armed career criminals. When arrests are made and firearms violations are discovered, the cases are reviewed with ATF for possible federal adoption. Cases that do not meet federal guidelines are referred to the District Attorney's office.

## Lake Charles Probation and Parole Gun Violence Reduction Unit (GVRU)

**By: Glenn A. Hanks, Supervisory Probation Officer**  
Director of Gun Violence Reduction Unit

The Lake Charles District of the Louisiana Division of Probation and Parole/Adult was awarded a Project Safe Neighborhoods grant to form a Gun Violence Reduction Unit (GVRU) in September of 2003. That office was the first regional office of Probation and Parole in the state to receive a grant of this kind for funding a unit within a regional office on a "stand-alone" basis. The grant funds were earmarked for equipment and overtime for the unit to operate beyond "normal business hours."

Our office has over 3,000 probation and parole cases under active supervision. The GVRU focused on 300 of the most violent convicted felons under supervision. These were individuals we felt were likely to possess firearms and illegal weapons.



*Continued Page 4*

# "Operation Trigger Time" at Lake Charles Police Dept.

**By: Lt. Ray Laviolet**  
Lake Charles Police Department

In April of 2002, Chief Don Dixon of the Lake Charles Police Department (LCPD) assigned Lt. Ray Laviolet to work part-time on a Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) gun violence task force known in Lake Charles as "Operation Trigger Time." Lt. Laviolet was then the property crimes supervisor in LCPD's Detective Division.

In 2002, there were 24 total gun cases referred for federal prosecution by LCPD, with 20 gun traces. Of the 24 cases, 8 were rejected and sent to state court. That left 16 cases for federal prosecution. Of those, 14 have pled and been sentenced, one is still pending, and one has just been indicted. Of the state cases, one has pled and was sentenced to 10 years.

In July 2003, Laviolet was assigned to work full-time on PSN, and was also given a full-time sergeant, Sergeant Kevin Kirkum, to work on PSN cases. A part-time clerk, Laura Wasson, was also added to the program.

A great asset to the operation, Ms. Wasson handles the filing, keeps track of the case dispositions, and reviews pawn shop records for stolen weapons and prohibited persons possessing firearms.

At the end of 2003, 83 case investigations were completed. Of those, 30 were sent to the Calcasieu Parish District Attorney's office for state prosecution, and 52 were sent to ATF and the U. S. Attorney's Office for federal prosecution.

In the first nine months of 2004, 87 gun case investigations have been completed. "Of those, Lt. Laviolet says, "45 have gone state, and 42 have gone federal." During the same period, 26 defendants have been indicted federally from referrals from this task force, 21 defendants pled guilty, 1 defendant went to trial, and 23 defendants were sentenced in federal court.

Gun tracing is important to the proper investigation of a gun violation and provides a solid permanent gun crime database for a jurisdiction. To date in 2004, 482 guns have been traced through the ATF trace center. When the trace results return from the ATF trace center, Laviolet and Kirkum attempt to make contact with the registered owners to find out whether a crime gun was sold or stolen.

The PSN task force, "Operation Trigger Time," now also covers (on call 24-7) a five parish area and accepts referrals from other law enforcement agencies in a five parish area. Laviolet and Kirkum provide in-service training for police agencies in the Calcasieu Parish area, explaining the criteria for federal prosecution.

## Commendations:

The following law enforcement officers have received commendation letters from the U.S. Attorney, Donald W. Washington, for their outstanding contributions to the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) Program:

**Deputy Todd Poche'** of the Rapides Parish Sheriff's Office for his work in USA v. Cody Franklin Ellerman. On August 5, 2004, Ellerman was sentenced under the federal Armed Career Criminal Act for the offense of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon to serve 262 months in the Bureau of Prisons by U. S. District Judge F.A. Little, Jr.

**Detective Mike Gore** of the Vernon Parish Narcotics Task Force for his work in USA v. Cassetti Brown. On February 12, 2004, Brown was indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine base, possession with intent to distribute cocaine base, possession of firearm by a convicted felon, and possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime. This matter is presently scheduled for trial on November 8, 2004 before U. S. District Judge Rebecca F. Doherty.

**Sgt. Gary Sonnier and Cpl. Todd Huber** of the Lake Charles Police Department for their work in USA v. Randy Lee Bias. On September 23, 2004, Bias was sentenced for the federal offenses of possession of 37.65 grams of crack cocaine with intent to distribute and possession of firearms during a drug trafficking crime to serve 12 years and 3 months in the Bureau of Prisons by U. S. District Judge Patricia Minaldi.

**Agent Sylvester Denmond** of Vernon Parish Narcotics Task Force and Leesville Police Department for his work in USA v. David Randall Smith. On August 12, 2004, Smith was indicted by a federal grand jury on the charges of distribution of marijuana and possession of firearms by a convicted felon. This matter is presently scheduled for trial on November 8, 2004 before U.S. District Judge Patricia Minaldi.

Please contact Lisa Alwert or Joe Mickel at 1-800-676-6992 concerning recognition of law enforcement officers for exemplary work on gun cases.

## U.S. Attorney cont'd from page 1

In FY 2003, nearly all – 93% – of convicted defendants, who were originally charged with federal offenses, were sentenced to some time in prison for convictions on firearms charges or other charges.

72% were sentenced to more than three years in prison, and over half of all defendants convicted were sentenced to more than five years in federal prison. State and local prosecutions have also increased.

In the Western District of Louisiana, with the help of state and local law enforcement, prosecutors, and other community leaders, we developed a PSN strategy to fit the unique gun crime problems in the District. Criminals who use guns are prosecuted under federal, state, or local laws, depending on which jurisdiction can provide the most appropriate punishment.

Our District has had much success with Project Safe Neighborhoods. In 2001, our District charged 59 defendants and 30 were sentenced in gun-related cases. In 2003, that number increased to a hefty 147 defendants being charged and 76 being sentenced in gun-related cases. In the first nine months of 2004, our office charged 107 defendants with gun charges and 78 have been sentenced.

*Editor's Note: Donald Washington was nominated to become United States District Attorney for the Western District of Louisiana in Sept. 2001, by George W. Bush, and was confirmed by the United States Senate on October 23, 2001.*

# Caddo Parish Juvenile Court Partnership for “Reducing Gun Violence Program”

**By: Laura Goodwin**

Executive Director

Volunteers for Youth Justice

Caddo Parish, like so many areas, has seen a rise in gun-related violence. One of the more troubling aspects of this issue is the number of teenagers involved. Enforcement is always necessary, but prevention is the key in addressing the problem of youth-related gun violence and seeking effective methods to combat the gun violence epidemic.

The Juvenile Court for Caddo Parish has partnered with a local organization to combat gun violence in Caddo by bringing together three essential components: enforcement, intervention, and prevention. The Juvenile Court for Caddo Parish was established in 1924 as a specialized court for children's issues.

The enforcement component of the project primarily involves the Juvenile Court which has jurisdiction over all juvenile delinquency matters, children in need of care, and termination of parental rights. The Court operates with three judges, a probation staff, and a fully operational juvenile detention facility. The Court's 25 probation officers supervise approximately 450 children per month.

Intervention is primarily the responsibility of The Resource Center, Inc. Founded in 1989, The Resource Center, Inc. provides charitable and educational programs for women and children, who are the victims of trauma, or adjudicated juvenile delinquents, and provides after school mentoring, academic enrichment, group counseling, transportation, and medical screening as part of an intervention program for at-risk low-income youths.

The prevention component of the project is primarily provided by Think First of the Ark-La-Tex, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, drawing on experience and resources from over 260 national and international chapters. The program provides speakers for adolescents and young adults on the subject of gun violence for Caddo Parish middle schools, and includes:

- A physician/educator gives a presentation on the nature and consequences of traumatic injuries from gun violence.
- Students are shown a film illustrating ways in which lives are destroyed by gun violence.
- Inmate speakers give a presentation discussing their personal experiences (including prison sentences) due to gun violence.

The following are a few comments taken from student evaluations: “Bad actions and behavior leads to either being jailed or killed, which I don't want to happen.” “They (inmates) encourage us not to make the same mistakes they did.”

Teacher evaluation comments included: “The personal testimonies of the inmates from Caddo Correctional Center and the question and answer session with students (were most effective).”



*Photo was taken at the Linwood Middle School ThinkFirst presentation. From left to right: Donna Cavanaugh, State Chapter Director, Local Chapter Coordinator of ThinkFirst, Caddo Correctional Center Inmate; Dr. Wanda Webb, LSU Pediatrics; Caddo Parish Deputy Lifford Jackson, Caddo Correctional Center Inmate; Sonia Cassidy, Deputy Chief of the Criminal Section, USAO; and, Deputy Betty Henderson, Caddo Parish Sheriff's Office.*

Collaboration between the Juvenile Court, its officers, Volunteers for Youth Justice, and Think First draws on the strengths and resources of each organization to address the epidemic where time and resources are most effective: *before the problem occurs.*

Each local area may have different problems and different organizations working to effect changes. However, the principle of cooperation, as opposed to competition, benefits the community, prevents duplication and combines strengths toward one goal: prevention of gun violence.

## Operation Trigger Time cont'd from page 2

These two officers also provide in-service training to all gun dealers concerning ways to prevent straw purchases. They give presentations to civic organizations and schools in order to inform the public about PSN and garner public support for the fight against gun violence.

“PSN and Operation Trigger Time is not just LCPD working to get criminals off the streets,” according to Lt. Laviolet, “Operation Trigger Time” is a PSN partnership with the U.S. Attorney, ATF, FBI, the U. S. Marshal Service, Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's Office, Calcasieu District Attorney's Office, and all other area law enforcement agencies to make the neighborhoods a safe place for the community, and the officers dedicated to serve the community on a daily basis.”

Lt. Laviolet said, “The more guns taken out of the hands of convicted felons and other prohibited persons, the safer it will be for our children coming up and the community in which we live. Working together will make this happen.”

According to LCPD Chief Don Dixon, in 2003, there was a 34.8% reduction in armed robberies with firearms in Lake Charles. Chief Dixon also reported a 24.7% reduction in cases concerning assault/battery with a firearm in 2003 compared to 2002.



# National Crime Victimization Statistics

**By: John Ashcroft**  
U.S. Attorney General

With violent crime stabilized at its lowest level since 1973, Americans across our nation are safer and have the freedom to live their lives without fear of becoming victims of crime. During 2003, the violent and property crime rates in our country remained at their lowest levels in 30 years. In 2002 and 2003, the violent crime rate fell 14% from the previous two-year period.

As the Bush Administration is prosecuting record numbers of gun crimes through programs like Project Safe Neighborhoods, we are reducing the number of gun-toting criminals on the streets and keeping gun crimes down. The Bureau of Justice Statistics found that only 7% of all violent crimes in 2003 were committed with a firearm, a decrease from 11% in 1993, and that the per capita rate of non-lethal firearm violence was only 1.9 per 1,000 persons, a two-thirds reduction over 10 years.

The Bureau also found that during 2002 and 2003, there was an 11% drop in rapes and a 27% drop in sexual assaults from the previous two-year period. Robberies were down 21%, aggravated assaults were down 20%, and simple assaults down 11% in that same period. Thanks to the hard work of law enforcement officers, judges, prosecutors, and corrections officers, law-abiding Americans are enjoying unprecedented safety. While the crime rate remains at a 30-year low, we renew our firm commitment to preventing crime, making our communities safer, and holding accountable those who violate our laws.



## National Project Safe Neighborhoods Conference

The National Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) conference was held June 15-17, 2004 in Kansas City, Missouri and included an 18-person delegation from the Western District of Louisiana (WDLA) who met with Attorney General John Ashcroft and other members of the PSN teams from across the nation to discuss efforts to reduce and prosecute gun crime.



**Front Row:** Mary Mudrick, Asst. U.S. Attorney; Judy Mouton, La. Commission on Law Enforcement; Dr. Stacy Moak, ULM; Joseph T. Mickel, Asst. U.S. Attorney; Captain Larry Coutee, Alexandria PD; U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft; U.S. Attorney Donald W. Washington; Kelly Wright, ULM; Lt. Kim Price, Shreveport PD; and Cpl. Lance LeBlanc, Lafayette PD. **Back Row:** Special Agent in Charge Mark Chait & Resident Agent in Charge Wade Rasberry, ATF; Dr. Harold Williamson, ULM; Prentice Louque, La. Commission on Law Enforcement; Dr. T. Michael Maher, ULL; Cpl. Eugene Ellis, Monroe PD; Lt. Ray Lavoilet, Lake Charles PD; and Sgt. Gregory Powell, Alexandria PD.

## GVRU cont'd from page 1

Within three to four months of the start date, the unit spent most of its time addressing daily complaints, which consisted of a broad range of matters from any information about a probationer/parolee with a gun to reports of drug trafficking. As the GVRU gathered intelligence concerning these complaints, group leaders would make decisions as to appropriate responses. When probable cause was established, the GVRU would locate the target in question and make arrests. As a result of GVRU arrests and related searches of residences, significant quantities of drugs were seized, including marijuana, Xanax, Methamphetamine, and assorted prescription drugs.

As of the end of July of 2004, the GVRU had seized 22 guns, made 57 searches, and 25 arrests. From these arrests, approximately 20 probation/parole violations were filed, and 16 new criminal charges, state and/or federal, are currently being pursued.

The Lake Charles District Probation and Parole Office is proud to be a partner in PSN. We would like to express our appreciation to U.S. Attorney Donald Washington, his staff, the law enforcement agencies, and the residents in Calcasieu, Cameron, and Jefferson Davis Parishes for working with us to make our communities a safer place to raise our families.